

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /026 W

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FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9325

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 2395

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, KS

SUBJECT: US STANCE ON DOMESTIC POLITICAL REPRESSION

1. REPORTS EXECUTION THIS MORNING OF EIGHT
PRP PRISONERS, EXECUTIONS, WHICH CARRIED OUT 24 HOURS
AFTER SUPREME COURT DECISION AND RAN CONTRARY TO GENERAL
EXPECTATIONS HERE, LEAVE NO ROOM FOR DOUBT THAT REGIME
HAS DECIDED ON VERY TOUGH POSTURE TO QUELL POLITICAL
DISSIDENCE. OTHER EVIDENCE, IF ANY NEEDED, CAN BE
FOUND IN PROMULGATION EMERGENCY MEASURE NO. 7 CLOSING
DOWN KOREA UNIVERSITY, IMMEDIATE DEPLOYMENT OF TROOPS
AT UNIVERSITY, ARREST OF KIM KWAN-SUK AND FELLOW KNCC
MEMBERS, AND VERY TOUGH STATEMENT ISSUED FOLLOWING DRP/
YUCHONGHOE CAUCUS.

2. DECISION TO TAKE TOUGH LINE OBVIOUSLY STEMS
FROM COMBINATION OF FACTORS, INCLUDING WELL-ESTABLISHED
PROPENSITY OF PARK AND HARD LINERS IN HIS ENTOURAGE
TO OVERREACT TO ANY PERCEIVED THREAT BY TAKING FIRM AND
DRASTIC PREEMPTIVE MEASURES. THIS PROPENSITY NOW
GIVEN ADDED IMPETUS BY PROBABLY GENUINE CONCERN THAT
COMMUNIST SUCCESSES IN SOUTH EAST ASIA AND INABILITY
OF U.S. TO ASSIST SAIGON AND PHNOM PENH MILITARILY
WILL TEMPT NORTH KOREANS TO TEST WILL OF BOTH ROK
AND U.S. ON THIS PENINSULA. RISE IN TENSIONS ALONG
DMZ CAUSED BY TUNNEL DISCOVERY AND RECENT AIR AND
SEA INCIDENTS LEND WEIGHT TO THESE CONCERNS.

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3. IN CURRENT ATMOSPHERE, THERE NO ASSURANCE WE
HAVE SEEN END OF CURRENT SERIES OF REPRESSIVE MEASURES.
HOWEVER, INHERENT NATURE OF MASS EXECUTION FOR POLITICAL
CRIMES WILL DOUBTLESS EVOKE QUESTIONS FROM
CHURCH, PRESS AND CONGRESSIONAL GROUPS REGARDING
USG ATTITUDE TO WHICH WE SHOULD BE PREPARED RESPOND.
RECOMMEND THAT DEPT SPOKESMAN ISSUE STATEMENT OR BE
PREPARED REPLY TO SUCH QUESTION ALONG FOLLOWING LINES:
BEGIN QUOTE: THE DEPARTMENT IS FULLY AWARE OF THE
DEEP CONCERN OVER THIS CASE SHOWN BY MANY
AMERICAN CITIZENS AND, OF COURSE, BY MANY KOREANS.
WHILE RECOGNIZING THE KOREAN GOVERNMENT'S SOVEREIGN
RIGHTS IN THIS MATTER, WE REGRET THAT THE KOREAN
AUTHORITIES HAVE TAKEN THE DRASTIC STEP OF EXECUTING
EIGHT OF THOSE FOUND GUILTY IN THIS CASE. END QUOTE.

4. REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS ASAP REGARDING DEPARTMENT
INTENTIONS. IN MEANTIME, EMBASSY WILL TAKE POSITION
ANY COMMENT MUST COME FROM DEPARTMENT.
SNEIDER

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